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A Visit With a Pair of Horned Owls

On or near a certain cliff six miles from Benicia, California, one may usually locate a pair of Pacific Horned Owls. I drop in on them occasionally during the breeding season, and this year on April 16th found both parent birds present and occupied with the care of their three young, which were about ready to leave the nesting hollow in the rock half way up the cliff.

Just before climbing to their nest I crossed a barbed wire fence, consisting of a single wire strung from rock to rock, and was puzzled to find a strip of skin about two inches long with about a dozen horned owl feathers attached thereto, caught on a sharp barb of the fence. The strip of skin was so securely wedged in the winding of the barb that I had difficulty in removing it. Sometimes a hunter who has killed a hawk or owl hangs it on a fence,—either to display to others his prowess as a hunter, or possibly to impress upon other hawks or owls that they really have no right to live. In this instance, however, the piece of skin was not on this fence on my previous visit a couple of weeks before, and both parents were still present, so there seemed to be no satisfactory explanation except that one of the parent owls had flown into the sharp, curved barb, becoming so entangled that he had to leave a small portion of his skin behind in order to free himself.

Upon reaching the young, I found all three threatening me with snapping bills, while standing on or alongside a portion of a full-grown jack rabbit. Scattered about on the rock were feathers of a flicker, coot, and pintail duck.

With such bird-killing tendencies the Horned Owl does place the bird-lover in a dilemma. He dislikes to see his bird friends murdered, and still he would not wish to have the Horned Owl exterminated from our avifauna. Personally, when this matter comes to my attention, I usually recall that man, too, kills other animal life for food:—such being true, can we consistently criticize?

Emerson A. Stoner, Benicia, California. May 31, 1932.



Birds at the Pinnacles

Birding at the Pinnacles, April 27 to 29, 1932, proved a delightful experience. Our camp grounds were alive with birds, all busy nesting, and the morning chorus was a riot of song. From the rocks above camp the marvelous cadence of the Canyon Wren's song was the biggest treat of all. By contrast to this elusive sprite, a large flock of Vultures lent a rather forbidding aspect; but it was interesting to see them roosting in the Digger pine trees at dusk, and to hear the noise of their wings, like the flapping of a large canvas, as they flopped about among the rocks. They spend much of the day resting in the shadows of the overhanging cliffs. White-throated Swifts abounded and Violet-green Swallows were nesting in the canyon walls by the dozens. The thirty-eight species noted within the boundary of Pinnacles Park were as follows:

Turkey Vulture	Plain Titmouse	Yellow Warbler
California Quail	Bush-tit	Townsend Warbler
Mourning Dove	Slender-billed Nuthatch	Hermit Warbler
White-throated Swift	Creeper	Bullock Oriole

Allen Hummingbird	Wren-tit	Black-headed Grosbeak
Red-shafted Flicker	House Wren	Linnet
Nuttall Woodpecker	Bewick Wren	Green-backed Goldfinch
Ash-throated Flycatcher	Canyon Wren	Lawrence Goldfinch
Black Phoebe	Russet-backed Thrush	Spotted Towhee
Western Flycatcher	Western Bluebird	Brown Towhee
Wood Pewee	Warbling Vireo	Junco
Violet-green Swallow	Cassin Vireo	Golden-crowned Sparrow
California Jay	Lutescent Warbler	

Mary I. Compton (Mrs. C. Norman), Berkeley, California. May 25, 1932.



A Crow's Meal—100% Beneficial

I killed a Western Crow from a flock of fully one hundred in a field near Elmira, Solano County, California, on May 4, 1932. An investigation of the stomach contents of this bird disclosed that the stomach was bulging out with thirty fat caterpillars of a size equaling the girth of an ordinary lead pencil, and from one to a little over two inches in length.

An entomologist at the Davis Farm School, without making a detailed study, reports two of them to be larvae of the White-lined Sphinx (a hawk moth), and the remaining twenty-eight as larvae in or nearing the pupal stage of Noctuid Moths.

Professor T. I. Storer of the Farm School wrote to me that "in the case of your specimen the bird was obviously beneficial, and I rather suspect that most of the crows here are either neutral or beneficial in their feeding habits."

It is quite possible that this flock of fully one hundred Crows from which I took my specimen had dined together, and if this could be taken as an average feeding for each bird, some 3,000 caterpillars would have been gathered by the flock at a single meal. No doubt this species is not always wisely condemned.

Emerson A. Stoner, Benicia, California. June 14, 1932.



Least Vireos

A short time previous to the end of May I was told by Mr. Charles A. Bryant of the presence of Least Vireos in Corral Hollow, which is located at the extreme eastern end of Alameda County. Since Grinnell and Wythe note in their "Directory to the Bird-life of the San Francisco Bay Region" the following: "Rare migrant, but one record of occurrence in the Bay region, a single specimen having been secured in Redwood City, San Mateo County, April 5, 1905," I thought that a further record would be worthy of mention.

Acting upon Mr. Bryant's suggestion the Oakland Ornithological Club included Corral Hollow in its June field trip; which was to the vicinity of Manteca. We found the birds where they had previously been seen. The notes they uttered were almost identical with those of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. There seemed to be but one family of the birds and the two or three young were following the parents for food. We obtained one of the young birds for positive identification and to establish the breeding record. The identification was made at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology in Berkeley, to whose collection the specimen was donated.

It might be of interest to say that on a large rock just above where the Vireos were seen the following birds were observed: Prairie Falcon; White-throated Swift; Cliff Swallow and Lark Sparrow, all with young. Four Rock Wrens and an equal number of Ravens were also seen, but no young could be found. Corral Hollow is a wonderful birding area.

Gordon Bolander, Oakland, California. July 1, 1932.



July Field Trip was taken on Sunday, the 17th, in San Francisco, starting from Sea Cliff, following the old street car grade overlooking the Golden Gate, then descending the trail to Land's End and continuing along the cliffs, finally

arriving at the Cliff House; then along the Beach Drive to the entrance of Golden Gate Park, entering the park and continuing to Stow Lake, where the trip ended.

A cold, foggy, windy day did not discourage the seventeen members and three guests who were present.

The pine trees which have been planted on the slopes above the water at Sea Cliff seemed an unusual place for the Russet-backed Thrush whose song informed us of his presence; farther on Pigeon Guillemots held the attention of the group, some resting on the water, others sitting on nearby rocks; from the observation platform at the Cliff House, the usual numbers of Brown Pelicans, Heermann Gulls and three species of Cormorants were noted.

A large flock of Sooty Shearwaters were present at some distance beyond the Seal Rocks. They furnished not only the feature of the day but also added a new species to the life-list of several of the members. A few of the Shearwaters resembled the Pink-footed, but the distance was too great to make identification certain.

Golden Gate Park was nearly void of birds, except in the buffalo paddock, where Robins and Brewer Blackbirds were numerous.

The Chain of Lakes, formerly beauty spots and supporting a varied number of interesting birds, are now all but dry and distressing to look upon. Only a few unattractive specimens of hybrid Mallards were present.

A dead Barn Owl was found in an out-of-the-way place in the park. Examination showed that he had fallen victim to a hunter's gun. If this owl was killed by an authorized person, it seems a pity that such a person should not appreciate the presence of one of our most useful birds.

A list of thirty-four species were noted as follows:

Sooty Shearwater	Pigeon Guillemot	Pileolated Warbler
Brown Pelican	Mourning Dove	English Sparrow
Farallon Cormorant	Anna Hummingbird	Brewer Blackbird
Brandt Cormorant	Allen Hummingbird	Linnet
Baird Cormorant	Red-shafted Flicker	Pine Siskin
Canvas-back Duck	Black Phoebe	Willow Goldfinch
Ruddy Duck	Chickadee	Green-backed Goldfinch
California Quail	Bush-tit	Spotted Towhee
Coot	Bewick Wren	Junco
Western Gull	Robin	Nuttall Sparrow
Heermann Gull	Russet-backed Thrush	Song Sparrow
Murre		



C. A. Bryant, Historian.

Lake Merced: For several months past members of our Association have viewed with great concern the work going on at Lake Merced, of the clearing away of tules, shrubbery, and, in fact, all vegetation bordering the lake. Not only has much of the natural beauty of the lake been destroyed, but it is quite obvious that great harm has been done to the abundant bird life which for years has found an ideal habitat there.

A committee was appointed to investigate the matter with a view to having this program of destruction at least modified or postponed if it was not possible to have it abandoned altogether.

As a member of the committee, Miss Cornelia C. Pringle called on Mr. N. A. Eckart, Chief Engineer of the Water Department, made him acquainted with the Association's views and showed him authentic records of the numerous species of birds found at Lake Merced over a period of years. Mr. Eckart manifested a great deal of interest and offered to co-operate in every possible way. The discussion developed the following points:

1. The clearing around the lakes was done to make it possible to raise the level of the water.
2. It was done more rapidly than was planned, to aid in unemployment relief.
3. The North Lake has not yet been cleared and the work on certain parts will be postponed until the nesting time is over.
4. The level of the lakes will be raised very slowly and will take several years to reach the proposed level.

5. This level once reached, it is the intention of the Department to maintain it. The conclusion of the committee is that in all probability the edge of the lake will return to its former condition of growth and if it is left undisturbed, as planned, there is no reason to doubt that an approximate return of bird life about Lake Merced will result.

Mr. Eckart arranged to have Mrs. A. B. Stephens, a member of the committee, go to Lake Merced with Mr. George W. Pracy in charge of the work. Mrs. Stephens discussed the various points with him, putting him entirely in touch with the Association's ideas.

Audubon Notes

August Meeting will be held on Thursday, the 11th, at 8 p. m., room 19, 2nd floor, Ferry Building.

The evening will be devoted to vacation experiences. Visitors as well as members are invited to contribute to the evening's program.



August Field Trip will be taken Sunday, the 14th, to Tennessee Cove, Marin County. Purchase round-trip ticket to Manzanita, 45c, and take 8:45 a. m. Sausalito Ferry. Bring luncheon.

Leader, Chas. A. Bryant.



Observations. It is again requested of members making reports of observations at monthly meetings to hand them in writing to Mrs. Stephens at the close of the meeting.



Membership for the remainder of 1932 is \$1.50. This includes subscription to the monthly bulletin, "The Gull."



July Meeting: The 180th regular meeting was held on July 14th, in room 19, Ferry Building, with thirty-five members and guests present. First Vice-President Chas. A. Bryant presiding.

The following new members were elected:

Miss Fern McGrath, San Francisco; Miss Ethel B. Walker, Berkeley, and Mr. Paul Covel of Oakland.

Field observations were reported as follows:

Commander and Mrs. Parmenter: June 10th, Searsville Lake, Pacific Nighthawk; June 25th, Cliff House, Heermann Gulls; July 13th, San Andreas Lake, Golden Eagle, Caspian Tern.

Mrs. Otis H. Smith: July 10th, Tiburon, six Rock Wrens.

Mrs. A. B. Stephens: July 3rd, Moss Landing, Long-billed and Hudsonian Curlews, Snowy and Black-bellied Plovers, Kildeer, Willets, Godwits, Dowitchers, Red-backed Sandpipers; on the ocean thousands of Sooty Shearwaters; July 4th, Point Lobos, thousands of Brown Pelicans, many with nests containing two or three young; Western Gulls, Oyster-catchers and Pigeon Guillemots, all with young; four Black Swifts.

Miss Selma Werner: July 12th, Livermore, Phainopepla with young.

The speaker of the evening, Dr. Adele Grant, gave a very interesting talk on "The Birds of South Africa."



Correction: July "Gull," "Winter Birding in Monterey," page 2, second paragraph: "Two Hermit Thrushes were most accommodating . . ." should be, "Two Hermit Warblers were . . ."

Audubon Association of the Pacific

For the Study and Protection of Birds

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Monthly meeting second Thursday, 8 P. M., Room 19, Ferry Building.

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Life memberships, \$50.00

Members are responsible for dues until written notice of resignation is received by Treasurer.